

Message Text

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ACTION AF-06

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02

INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15

USIA-06 AID-05 PC-01 OMB-01 OPR-02 EB-07 COME-00

SIL-01 LAB-04 /086 W

----- 046607

R 171238Z MAR 76

FM AMEMBASSY NIAMEY

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3154

INFO AMEMBASSY ABIDJAN

AMEMBASSY BAMAKO

AMEMBASSY COTONOU

AMEMBASSY LAGOS

AMEMBASSY LOME

AMEMBASSY OUAGADOUGOU

AMEMBASSY PARIS

USMISSION OECD PARIS UNN

C O N F I D E N T I A L NIAMEY 1131

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, NG

SUBJ: GON ISSUES CLARIFINITIONS ON COUP

1. THE GON HAS GIVEN ITS VERSION OF MONDAY'S COUP ATTEMPT IN A PRESS CONFERENCE BY SECRETARY OF STATE FOR INFORMATION DAOUDA DIALLO MARCH 16. KEY ELEMENT IS ALLEGATION THAT PLOTTERS HAD FOREIGN SUPPORT. SALIENT POINTS AS FOLLOWS:

2. LEADER WAS SIDI MOKHAMED WITH BEYERE MOUSSA AND AHMED MOUDDOUR PLAYING IMPORTANT BUT LESSER ROLES. THERE WERE THREE OTHER JUNIOR OFFICERS OF THE ARMY INVOLVED. REST OF FORCE CONSISTED OF ABOUT 20 SOLDIERS UNDERSIDI'S ORDERS WHO WERE UNWITTING ACCOMPLICES DURING EARLY STAGES OF FIGHTING AND LATER SWITCHED SIDES.

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3. INITIAL TARGETS WERE ARMY HEADQUARTERS AND KOUNTCHE'S

RESIDENCE (WHICH ADJOIN EACH OTHER IN VICINITY OF PRESIDENTIAL PALACE.) SIDI'S RESPONSIBLE POSITION AS CHIEF OF CABINET, MINISTRY OF DEFENSE, ALLOWED HIM EASY ENTRY AND GROUP SUCCEEDED IN OCCUPYING ARMY HEADQUARTERS. KOUNTCHE DEFENDED OWN RESIDENCE (PRESUMABLY ALONG WITH OTHERS) AND ARMY'S COUNTER ATTACK HAD QUICK SUCCESS.

4. ALL ELEMENTS OF ARMY REMAINED LOYAL. PLOTTERS CONTACTED UNITS ELSEWHERE IN NIGER BUT GOT NO SUPPORT.

5. COMMUNIQUE HAD BEEN PREPARED BY COUP LEADERS; MOUDDOUR WAS PUTTING FINISHING EDITORIAL TOUCHES ON IT AT SCENE OF FIGHTING WHEN HE WAS SEIZED. PORTION APPEARS IN SAHEL MARCH 17.

6. ARMS USED IN ATTACK WERE NOT FROM ARMY STOCKS AND CLEARLY CAME FROM ABROAD. AT THIS POINT NO COUNTRY HAS BEEN ACCUSED, SINCE SUCH EQUIPMENT ALSO SOMETIMES APPEARS ON WORLD MARKETS. INVESTIGATION CONTINUES. ARMS WILL GO ON PUBLIC DISPLAY MORNING MARCH 17.

7. PLOTTERS KNOWN TO HAVE BEEN IN CONTACT WITH "FOREIGN DIPLOMAT" AT 0800, MARCH 15. DIPLOMAT NOT IDENTIFIED. GON HAS NOT YET "FORMALLY ESTABLISHED" THAT THERE WAS FOREIGN INTERVENTION.

8. MOTIVATION OF PLOTTERS WAS MOSTLY PERSONAL. SIDI PORTRAYED AS DUBIOUS CHARACTER WHO HAD HAND IN THE TILL EARLIER POINT IN CAREER. SIDI WASA USER OF DRUGS. BAYERE MOUSSA SUFFERED FROM INTELLECTUAL ARROGANCE (COMMENT: HE IS GRADUATE OF ST. CYR - END COMMENT) AND AMBITON AND SMARTING FROM FACT THAT AS MINISTER HE HAD NEVER BEEN MEMBER OF SMC. TOO EARLY TO TELL WHETHER MOUDDOUR ACTED ON OWN ACCOUNT OR WITH SUPPORT OF OTHER LABOR UNIONS. THIS ASPECT ALSO UNDER INVESTIGATION. INDICATIVE OF AMATURISHNESS OF EFFORT, WAS FACT THAT BAYERE MOUSSA FOUND IN POSSESSION OF 3 KILOS OF "AMULETS".

9. SIDI, BAYERE MOUSSA AND MOUDDOUR ARE ALL ALIVE.
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10. COMMENT: GON ACCOUNT IS EFFORT TO COPE WITH PROBLEM OF EXPLAINING OBVIOUS FACT THAT COUP ALMOST SUCCEEDED WITHOUT DRAWING TOO MUCH ATTENTION TO VULNERABILITY OF REIGME. EXTENT OF FIGHTING AND NUMBERS OF TROOPS INVOLVED CLEARLY UNDERSTATED. REFERENCES TO DRUGS AND WITCHCRAFT AS WELL AS ALLEGATIONS OF FOREIGN INVOLVEMENT ALSO SEEM DESIGNED

TO DIVERT ATTENTION, EVEN THOUGH GINGERLY TREATMENT OF
FOREIGN INVOLVEMENT (NO DIRECT ACCUSATIONS) MAY
SUGGEST GENUINE CONCERN THAT PLOTTERS HAD OUTSIDE
SUPPORT. GON ACCOUNT LEAVES LITTLE DOUBT THAT ROLE
OF UNIONS AND OF ARMY STILL BEING PROBED. THUS MATTER
IS FAR FROM RESOLVED, AND ATMOSPHERE REMAINS ONE OF
APPREHENSION AND UNCERTAINTY EVEN THOUGH IN MANY RESPECTS
LIFE HAS RETURNED TO NORMAL. CURFEW REMAINS IN EFFECT
FROM 1930 TO 0630.HECK

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